



Columbus City Attorney

Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. eNewsletter

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A Word from City Attorney Pfeiffer

Every day, the City Attorney’s office works diligently on behalf of our clients: the City of Columbus, its Mayor, City Council, all city departments, including our safety forces and the criminal justice system, and, most importantly, our residents. Just like any other law firm, we strive to offer exceptional client services and legal representation, from prosecuting misdemeanor crimes, to going after tax-cheats, to offering dispute resolution.

Through this digital newsletter, its future editions, and other media channels, I hope the public becomes more acutely aware of the multifaceted legal matters we address, the services we provide to our residents, and the approaches we take to effectively and efficiently solve problems.

As always, I’m interested in hearing feedback about how our office is performing and learning about new, innovative ideas that may help us look at an issue from a different perspective. For those who are familiar with me, you know I’m always visiting the various sections of our city to meet with folks. If we don’t happen to cross paths at one of the many civic events throughout the city or during one of my stops throughout our many neighborhoods, please feel free to call or email my office to provide your input. I also encourage you to follow us on Twitter, Facebook, the web, or C-TV.

Fighting Blight

Investing in public safety is the City’s most important priority, as 72% of the general revenue fund is devoted to police, fire, and criminal justice. Equally as important are quality of life issues, as they are closely associated with the sense of safety and well-being in our neighborhoods.

Accordingly, the City Attorney’s office actively works with the Division of Police, Code Enforcement, Columbus Public Health, Sanitation, neighborhood associations and community organizations to tackle the challenges that can have a detrimental impact on our quality of life, such as graffiti, vacant and abandoned buildings, and code violations. These issues are most often directly related to complex, socio-economic factors that don’t

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have easy solutions and require collaboration among local, state, and federal government as well as the private sector and community groups.

In order to focus on these challenges from a neighborhood perspective, City Attorney Pfeiffer created the *Zone Initiative Team*, a group of attorneys and other support staff assembled from several divisions to use civil nuisance abatement actions to rid Columbus of dilapidated buildings, open dumping, excessive noise, and other forms of blight. The *Zone Initiative* gets its name from the fact that an assistant City Attorney is assigned to each of the city's five zones, which are comprised of four police precincts each, as determined by the Columbus Division of Police.

When necessary, the *Zone Initiative* attorneys file complaints for injunctive relief, asking the Franklin County Environmental Court to declare a public nuisance and require the property owner to either abate the problem or allow the city to do so. If the property owner does not comply within 45 days of the court order, the *Zone Initiative Team* will file a motion for contempt and can seek a daily fine of \$100-\$250 until the nuisance is abated. To find out who is the *Zone Initiative* attorney assigned to your neighborhood, [click here](#).

The purpose of Title 47 of the Columbus City Codes, also referred to as the *Nuisance Abatement Code*, is "to protect the public's health, safety and welfare and to prevent the blighting of the city's neighborhoods" (§4701.03).

Prosecutor Profile

The Prosecutor Division of the City Attorney's office, which is responsible for the prosecution of misdemeanor offenses in municipal court, is headed by Chief Prosecutor Lara N. Baker and Chief of Staff Bill R. Hedrick. From case initiation in the Prosecution Resources Unit to defense of successful



Did You Know?

Last year, the City Attorney's Office...

Prosecuted 109,732 misdemeanor cases.

Initiated 129,410 cases on behalf of the 15 Municipal Court Judges, with each case having an average of three court dates.

Scheduled 372 mediation hearings on behalf of the public.

prosecutions in the Appellate Unit, the Prosecutor Division provides a wide array of services to resolve criminal allegations and complaints. The division consists of Assistant City Prosecutors, the Legal Assistant Unit, the Prosecution Resources Unit, the Domestic Violence/Stalking Unit, and the Appellate Unit.

In addition to the services provided to the residents of Columbus and the unincorporated areas of Franklin County, the Prosecutor Division also represents, through contractual agreement, the cities of Westerville and Worthington, as well as the villages of Canal Winchester, Harrisburg, Lockbourne, Marble Cliff, Obetz, Riverlea, Valleyview and Urbancrest.

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Legislative Update

Since the 2011 general revenue fund budget was adopted in late January, City Council has passed several ordinances that relate to the City Attorney's office and the Municipal Court. Here are a few recent highlights:



Grant Awarded to Help Domestic Violence Victims —

Ordinance 0103-2011 authorized the transfer of \$37,667 from the City Attorney's general fund budget to be used as matching funds to accept a \$107,000 federal VAWA Domestic Violence Prosecutors grant. The grant will help fund two prosecutors in the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit, which assists witnesses and victims of domestic violence through the legal process and provides counseling, referrals, and links to agencies and community resources.

City Attorney Wins Federal Funding to Fight Stalking — *Ordinance 0144-2011* authorized the City of Columbus to accept a \$91,124 federal grant to partially fund a Cyber Crime Investigator and a Domestic Violence Victim Advocate within the City Attorney's Prosecutor Division. The Cyber Crime Investigator investigates telecommunication harassment allegations and frequently assists in stalking cases by helping identify the perpetrators. The Domestic Violence Victim Advocate works with victims of domestic violence and stalking in their initial court appearances, usually within days of the incident, as well as assisting them with obtaining emergency protection orders.

Municipal Court Continues to Provide Dispute Resolution Services — The Franklin County Municipal Court has been providing a pre-filing mediation program for small claims cases since 1984. The program provides mediation for individuals and business who wish to resolve their disputes and avoid filing a small claims case, with approximately 2,500 mediations scheduled each year. City Council passed *ordinance 0310-2011* to appropriate \$97,100 to fund the program for fiscal year 2011. To further support this program, the Municipal Court instituted a special project cost of \$15.00 per case charge that covers up to five checks per debtor.



Leveling the Playing Field for Taxpayers — The City Attorney's Claims Section has been recovering delinquent taxes and fees through an accounts receivable collection program since 1996. *Ordinance 0419-2011* authorized the City Attorney to renew one-year contracts with the firms of Linebarger, Goggin, Blair & Sampson and Capital Recovery Systems for collection services. The City receives 100% of the debt owed to it through these collection services contracts due to legislation sponsored by Councilmember Eileen Paley in 2009. Since then, a 30% fee is added to the total debt collected instead of being paid from the total amount collected. This allows the City to recover 100% of the debts collected and the debtors pay the additional 30% collection fee.

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Meet the Staff

Chief Prosecutor Lara N. Baker has been heading up the City Attorney's Prosecutor Division since February 2007, replacing her predecessor, Stephen L. McIntosh, when he took the bench as a Franklin County Common Pleas Court judge. Having originally started in the City Attorney's office as a mediator in the night prosecution program while still in law school, Lara's extensive experience working in almost every section of the Prosecutor Division enables her to take a comprehensive and holistic managerial approach.

As Chief Prosecutor, she assumes myriad administrative responsibilities while also taking the opportunity to prosecute cases, meet with the community, and represent the City Attorney's office when working with organizations such as M.A.D.D. and the Safe Surrender program. Lara has a deep commitment to public service and particularly enjoys meeting with community members to offer insight into the law and to provide a practical understanding of how the municipal legal system operates. She always has had a passion for constitutional law and believes that criminal law is the best area of practice to interact with the constitution on a day-to-day basis.

Her advice to young attorneys and law school students? "Be prepared." Lara sees on a daily basis that the most successful attorneys are always those who are overly prepared and ready for any possible contingency. She also says, while new attorneys may not have experience on their side in the beginning, they can have knowledge. "Know your case. Know your case law. And know your evidence. Don't try to emulate someone else; instead, find your strength and build on it." Advice that Chief Prosecutor Lara Baker has taken to heart herself.

Just the Facts

"The city attorney shall be the legal adviser of and attorney and counsel for the city, and for all officers and departments thereof in matters relating to their official duties. The city attorney shall prosecute or defend all suits for and in behalf of the city, and shall prepare all contracts, bonds and other instruments in writing in which the city is concerned and shall certify in writing approval of the form and correctness thereof."

(City Charter, Section 67)

sovereignty, the Columbus City Charter states that Columbus "shall have all powers that now are, or hereafter may be granted to municipalities by the constitution or laws of Ohio."



Lara N. Baker

Title: Chief Prosecutor

Education: The Ohio State University
Moritz College of Law, J.D., 1994
Miami University, B.A., 1991

Honors Awards: M.A.D.D. Prosecutor of the Year Award (2008) | Certificate of Commendation, OIG BWC Taskforce (2008) | Capital Crossroads Service to the Community Award (2005) | Mayor's Award of Excellence (2000)

- The powers and duties of the City Attorney are prescribed in Section 67 of the Columbus City Charter.
- The Columbus City Charter was originally adopted by the electors of Columbus on May 5, 1914.
- The concept of municipal charters originated in Europe during the middle ages. The English word derives from the Old French, *charte*, which originates from *charta*, the Latin word for "paper."
- Following the tradition of some of the earliest charters, which granted restricted authority and formally recognized the exercise of limited rights, wherein the grantor retains





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Citizen Action!

The City Attorney’s office needs your help. In a recent report, the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that \$12 billion is spent annually in the United States to clean up graffiti. No area is immune to this crime. Graffiti is a scourge on our neighborhoods that requires continued teamwork from the City Attorney’s office, the Division of Police, neighborhood block watches, business owners, and individual citizens. While Columbus has one of the strictest codes against graffiti, catching the perpetrators can be challenging. This is where we need the community’s help. **Below is information on those who have outstanding warrants for their arrest for graffiti.** In fact, one of these individuals, Kyle Lamblez, was recently featured in the City Attorney’s “Fugitive of the Week” program.

If you have any information concerning these individuals, please contact Prosecutor Bill Hedrick at (614) 645-8874 or email him at brhedrick@columbus.gov



Matthew C. Giaimo Case Number:
 DOB: 6-3-90 (Age 20) 2008 ERB 071266
 Height: 5’11” Weight: 130 Charge(s):
 Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown 2309.27 - Graffitiism



Kyle C.J. Lamblez Case Number:
 DOB: 6-18-86 (Age 24) 2008 ERB 073890, 2009 ERB 074060
 Height: 5’6” Weight: 140 Charge(s):
 Hair: Brown Eyes: Hazel 2309.27 - Graffitiism (one count)
 2309.27 - Graffitiism (two counts)



Andrew B. Jeffries Case Number:
 DOB: 8-23-85 (Age 25) 2007 ERB 070058
 Height: 6’3” Weight: 200 Charge(s):
 Hair: Black Eyes: Brown 2309.27 - Graffitiism



Julian N. Menaged Case Number:
 DOB: 1-20-89 (Age 22) 2007 ERB 073059
 Height: 5’8” Weight: 139 Charge(s):
 Hair: Brown Eyes: Blue 2309.27 - Graffitiism

If you are one of the listed individuals, you are strongly encouraged to turn yourself in or contact an attorney.

The Columbus Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service can be reached at (614) 221-0754 and the Franklin County Public Defender’s Office can be reached at (614) 719-8599.

Follow the Office of City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.

